

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

- **MAKING LIFE NORMAL AGAIN**
- **CHANGES**
- **CHILDREN**
- **REESTABLISHING INTIMACY**
- **SINGLE SERVICE MEMBERS**
- **GOING BACK TO WORK**
- **HOMECOMING LET-DOWN**

INTRODUCTION

- REUNION IS A MAJOR EVENT FOR ALL CONCERNED
- REUNION CAN BE AS CHALLENGING AS DEPLOYMENT
- REUNION DIFFICULTIES OFTEN COME FROM CHANGES DURING SOLDIER'S ABSENCE
- REUNION STRESS IS NORMAL

ACHIEVING NORMALCY

- LIFE AFTER DEPLOYMENT IS DIFFERENT
- REUNIONS CAN BE DIFFICULT
- RECOGNIZE STRESSORS:
 - PHYSICAL
 - MENTAL
 - SUBSTANCE ABUSE
 - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

CHANGES

- PEOPLE LEFT BEHIND BECAME MORE INDEPENDENT IN SOLDIER'S ABSENCE
- THEY ACQUIRED NEW ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND NEW SKILLS
- THE HOUSE RULES MAY HAVE CHANGED
- THEY MIGHT HAVE MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT SOLDIER BEING BACK

DEALING WITH CHANGE

- TRY TO APPRECIATE THEIR GROWTH
- DON'T ROCK THE BOAT TOO FAST
- RE-NEGOTIATE ROLES

CHANGE IS GOOD

PERSONAL GROWTH AND
INDEPENDENCE ENHANCE
RELATIONSHIPS *IF* EVERYONE ADAPTS
AND INCORPORATES THOSE
CHANGES INTO THE RELATIONSHIP

RELATIONSHIP STRATEGIES

- COMMUNICATE OPENLY AND HONESTLY
- AVOID CRITICIZING YOUR PARTNER
- APPROACH EACH OTHER AS EQUALS
- DON'T EXPECT OLD PROBLEMS TO GO AWAY

COMMUNICATION

- SOME WILL WANT TO TALK ABOUT ACTIVITIES; SOME WILL NOT
- SOME WILL KEEP GETTING ASKED ABOUT THEIR ACTIVITIES
- SOLDIER MAY MISS THE EXCITEMENT OF THE DEPLOYMENT FOR A WHILE
- THINGS WILL HAVE CHANGED WHILE SOLDIER WAS GONE

COMMO (CONT)

- FACE-TO FACE COMMUNICATION MAY BE HARD AT FIRST
- SPOUSES MAY HAVE NEW FRIENDS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS
- YOUR PRIORITIES AND OUTLOOK MAY HAVE CHANGED
- YOUR PETS MAY ACT OUT

REESTABLISH INTIMACY

- SEX AND INTIMACY ARE DIFFERENT
- EXPECTATIONS - EXPECT MALFUNCTIONS
- CHOOSE INTIMACY OVER SEX
- “MEN ARE FROM MARS, WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS”
 - MEN FIX
 - WOMEN SHARE

SINGLE SOLDIERS

- COMMUNICATION CAN EASE YOUR TRANSITION
- BE PATIENT
- RECOGNIZE AND ADAPT TO CHANGE
- GO SLOW - STOP, LOOK, AND LISTEN
- COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILY
- TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT CHOICES

SINGLE PARENTS

- COMMUNICATE WITH CAREGIVER
- BE PATIENT
- INVOLVE CAREGIVER IN TRANSITION
- CHANGES ARE DIFFICULT FOR CHILDREN
- CHILDREN WILL FEEL OUT OF CONTROL, LET THEM HAVE INPUT

NEW FATHERS

- BABIES COST A LOT - BE PREPARED
- UNDERSTAND SIBLINGS' RESPONSE TO NEW ADDITION
- YOU MAY HAVE SOME JEALOUSY OR GUILT TOWARD BABY
- SUGGESTION: ACCEPT YOUR ABSENCE AS UNAVOIDABLE, THE BABY WILL NEED YOU

RETURNING MOTHERS

- MOTHERS OFTEN HAVE A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR KIDS:
 - NURTURERS
 - PRIMARY CAREGIVERS
 - TEACHERS
- BE SENSITIVE TO A CHILD'S NEEDS:
SOME INTERNALIZE MOM'S ABSENCE
WHILE SOME WANT TO RECONNECT

CHILDREN

- DETERMINING FACTORS:
 - AGE
 - PERSONALITY
 - PAST EXPERIENCES
 - RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILD
 - SEX OF THE PARENT GONE

KID ISSUES

- MAY NOT KNOW YOU WHEN HELD <1
- HIDE OR BE SLOW TO APPROACH 1-3
- GUILT OR SCARED ABOUT YOUR ABSENCE 3-5
- DEMAND TIME AND ATTENTION 6-2
- MOODY OR ACT DISINTERESTED >13
- DIVIDED LOYALTIES AND FEAR - ALL

MORE KID ISSUES

- MAY BE GLAD TO SEE YOU BUT NOT ACT LIKE IT
- YOU MAY SEEM LIKE A STRANGER
- THEY MAY FEAR YOU
- LIMITED COPING BEHAVIORS
- MEET ACTING OUT WITH UNDERSTANDING, NOT PUNISHMENT

DEALING WITH YOUR KIDS

- MAKE SURE THEY KNOW HOW HAPPY YOU ARE TO SEE THEM
- PRAISE THEM FOR HELPING OUT WHILE YOU WERE GONE
- REASSURE THEM CONSTANTLY
- INCLUDE IN YOUR SHARING OF EXPERIENCES
- SHOW INTEREST IN THEIR ACTIVITIES

BACK TO WORK

- ADJUSTING TO WORK CAN BE AS AWKWARD AS ADJUSTING TO HOME
- TO DEAL WITH THESE CHANGES KEEP IN MIND:
 - COMMUNICATION
 - PATIENCE
 - ANTICIPATE CHANGE
 - CHANCE FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

WORK SUGGESTIONS

- DISCUSS WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR:
 - YOU MAY HAVE CHANGED
 - SUPERVISOR MAY CHANGED
 - WORK ENVIRONMENT MAY HAVE CHANGED
- AVOID TAKING CHARGE RIGHT AWAY
- FIND OUT ENTITLEMENTS / BENEFITS

HOMECOMING LET DOWN

- IT IS NORMAL
- IT WILL LESSEN AND DISAPPEAR
- CAN BE DUE TO FALSE EXPECTATIONS:
 - RELATIONSHIPS
 - CHILDREN & FAMILY
 - FRIENDS
 - WORK

HOMECOMING RED FLAGS

- WATCH OUT FOR DEPRESSION
 - HOPELESSNESS/DESPAIR
 - LACK OF INTEREST IN ACTIVITIES
 - LACK OF ENERGY
 - CHANGE IN WEIGHT
 - SLEEP DISTURBANCE
 - INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS

RED FLAGS (CONT)

- **ANXIETY OR PANIC ATTACKS**
 - PERSISTENT FEAR, FLASHBACKS
 - AVOIDING PEOPLE, NIGHTMARES
 - JUMPINESS, PERSEVERATING THOUGHTS
- **TALK TO SOMEONE SOONER RATHER THAN LATER**

CONCLUSION

- REUNION IS A MAJOR EVENT FOR ALL CONCERNED
- REUNION CAN BE AS CHALLENGING AS DEPLOYMENT
- REUNION DIFFICULTIES USUALLY COMES FROM CHANGES DURING YOUR ABSENCE
- REUNION STRESS IS NORMAL